

A
SHORT PLEA

IN FAVOUR OF

Infant Baptism ;

AND OF

Administering it by SPRINKLING.

By SAMUEL BOTTOMLEY,
Of SCARBROUGH. *K*

*That the Blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles,
through Jesus Christ. Gal. iii. 14.*

*Then will I sprinkle clean Water upon you, and ye shall
be clean. Ezek. xxxvi. 25.*

L E E D S :

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[Price S I X - P E N C E .]



T H E

P R E F A C E.

LET not any suppose, that a fondness for controversy, about the circumstantialia of Religion, hath given birth to this publication; for if my word may be credited, the very reverse is true. It is roundly asserted by some, that my practice respecting Baptism, has no foundation in the Scriptures, but rests on the pillar and ground which supports Popery. That the Church of Rome approves of Infant Baptism is true, nor do I protest against her on that account; were I to reject every doctrine which Papists receive, of course, I must disown both the being of a God, the divine mission of Christ, and the reality of a future state. But I certainly see, or think I see, sufficient reasons contained in the Word of God, for baptizing Infants; what they are, may be learnt from the following pages, and how far I am mistaken, the candid reader is at liberty to judge for himself: If the practice cannot be supported by the Scrip-
tures,

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tures, I am heartily willing it should fall to the ground; for surely, if my heart deceives me not, I would no longer practice as a sacred rite, what cannot be defended by the sacred word. But should the reasons advanced, weigh as much with the reader, as they do with the writer, I presume, he will not refuse Baptism to Infants, or say it is not properly administered to them by sprinkling or pouring.

My regard for those Christians who oppose my principles and practice respecting this matter, is great, and to give them offence is most foreign from my wish and design. To enter into controversy with them, is what I am fully determined not to do; and I hope their own good sense and candor, will prevent their interpreting this short plea in favour of my own conduct, into a proclamation of war against them.

As a reason for this publication, I do not pretend either the importance of the subject, or any new discoveries I have made into it; indeed the latter can now hardly be expected, for having been so often and ably investigated, it must in a great measure have long since been exhausted. The principal reason is, that

God

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God having committed to my trust the care of a few precious souls, which I esteem a charge far more important, than any language I know is able to express, and finding it incompatible with my plan of promoting their eternal interests, to insist so largely and frequently on the subject, as might seem necessary to furnish them with answers to those who make it a study to find objections against their practice; I have therefore judged it not improper, to draw up some of the principal reasons for our proceedings herein, that they may have them to turn to as occasion requires.

I have heard and read a little on both sides the question, and several times grieved to observe the controversy swelled, with what appeared to me, to have little or nothing to do with it. To defend a sacred subject by sytyrical wit, instead of solid argument, is certainly a disgrace unto it; and yet several writers on the subject before us, have given their calm dispassionate readers cause to sorrow on this very account. That I may be kept from running into this error whilst writing my free thoughts, is the unfeigned desire of my heart.

I flatter myself, nothing is advanced that will stimulate any to take public notice of it; but if any person should, what he offers will meet with a careful and candid perusal, and if it should work conviction on my mind, will produce an honest confession both from my mouth and pen. But till something of this is the case, though all the world besides should deny Baptism to the Infants of Christian parents, I am persuaded I shall not do it.—I have only to recommend to the blessing of God, what I have advanced in his name, and subscribe myself

The READER'S

Well-wisher and Servant,

For CHRIST'S Sake,

S. Bottomley.

SCARBRO',
NOV. 10, 1781.

A Short Plea in Favour of Infant Baptism, &c.

P A R T I.

THAT Baptism is an ordinance of God, is generally allowed;* but who are the proper subjects of it, and by what mode it ought to be administered, have long been disputed by some of the most pious and learned men: From this circumstance, I have sometimes inclined to think, that if the matter were either so important in itself, or so clearly revealed in the Scriptures, as each party in their turns have seemed to insinuate; surely men of such a character, and who agree in every thing else, would hardly have differed so widely in this particular.

I observe, when the opposers of Infant Baptism contend against the Socinians, they seem dissatisfied that their adversaries bring for proof against Christ's divinity, such texts as only prove his humanity: They tell them, they firmly believe that Christ was very man, but

* They who suppose, that water-baptism is superseded by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, seem to have forgot the Apostle Peter's words, Acts x. 47. "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"—Observe, he urges their having received the Holy Ghost, as the reason why they should be baptised with water.

but that it by no means follows from thence, that he was not also very God : But have not we the same reason to complain of them, when they contend with us against Infant Baptism ? They are generally very copious upon such parts of Scripture as inform us of the Baptism of Believers ; but, What have they to do in the controversy between them and us ? When they fight with these weapons, they should not fight with us, for we are not their enemies : In this point they know we are agreed, and contend as much as they, that adult persons converted from Judaism or Heathenism to Christianity, ought to be admitted into the Church by Baptism ; and that a confession of their faith is previously necessary : For this, we have, besides the command of Christ, almost numberless examples ; but at the same time we contend, that all who received Christian Baptism in adult years, must either have so received it, or not at all, seeing they never received it before ; and also, that there is not a single instance of any other kind of Adult Baptism recorded in the whole Bible. As much as our adversaries talk of *precept* and *example*, we tell them honestly, that if they can find us one command of God, prohibiting Baptism to Infants, we will join with them in obeying it ; or if they can produce us one example from Scripture of its ever having been refused to them, we will join with them in following it : But on mature search it will be found, that of all the thousands who were baptised when adult, not one of them was the offspring of a baptised believer ; and yet, as a judicious writer takes notice, “ The history
“ of the Acts of the Apostles continued above
“ the space of thirty years from Christ’s as-
“ cent

“ cent to Paul’s imprisonment at Rome;
 “ and during that time, thousands were born
 “ of Christian parents, and grown up to the
 “ age of twenty or thirty years, and yet there
 “ is not one instance in the Scripture of any
 “ such Baptisms in adult years.” Now to
 suppose they were baptised in their infancy,
 will prevent our being surprized at not find-
 ing any of them baptized after they became
 adults.

But before I proceed any further, let the
 question in debate be properly stated; which
 is not, as observed before, whether adult con-
 verts to Christianity ought to be admitted in-
 to the Church by Baptism, but when they are
 so admitted, What is to be done with their
 infants? Are they to receive, or be refused
 this divine ordinance? To receive it, say we.
 To be refused it, say others. The reason why
 I do not refuse it to them, is, because I find
 no *divine* authority for so doing: Whether I
 have such authority for administering Baptism
 to them, let the candid and impartial reader
 weigh the contents of this publication,—judge
 for himself, and act accordingly.

Some of our opposers have insinuated, as an
 objection against our arguments, that they are
 (to use their word) circumlocutory. We free-
 ly own, that they are drawn from consequences,
 but the objection, if it be one, stands with as
 much force against their arguments as ours:
 We do not pretend that it is written in so
 many words in the Bible, that the infants of
 believers *are* to be baptised; nor can our ad-
 versaries find any text therein which says they
are not to be baptised: If either one or the
 other

other of these declarations could be found in holy writ, I conceive an end would be put to the debate; but as this is not the case, we both proceed exactly in the same method of argumentation: They not being able to find the latter declaration, *viz.* That Infants *are not* to be baptized, endeavour to prove it from consequences; and if we do not blame them for arguing *against* our practice from consequences, why should they blame us for arguing from consequences *for* it? I do not see that either of us are blame-worthy for taking this method, seeing it is the only method we can take; or indeed how any can blame us, without, at the same time, casting a reflection both on our Lord and his Apostles: Christ seemed to think this method sufficient for proving a more important doctrine than Infant Baptism, *to wit,* The great doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, Matt. xxii. 31, 32. where he opposeth against the Sadduces, who denied it, not a passage where it was expressed in so many words, but one from which it might be inferred by just consequences, *viz.* Exod. iii. 6. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Is it not at once perceived, that to prove the resurrection from this text, many consequences are necessary?—Paul and Barnabas took the very same method to prove from the Old Testament that they were to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, Acts xiii. 46, 47. "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles." Now this ancient promise to Christ, they considered as an implicit command to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles;

Gentiles ; and hence I conclude, that a virtual command, and proof from scripture by just consequences, may be safely depended upon in the most weighty and important matters. But to proceed :

I apprehend, one main argument for Infant Baptism under the present dispensation, is drawn from Infant Circumcision under the last ; and which hath hitherto stood against the most formidable batteries which have been formed against it, and will, I doubt not, stand so long as heaven and earth endure.

It appears to me, that Circumcision was appointed and administered under a dispensation of that covenant which believers are now under.—That Circumcision being done away, Christian Baptism is substituted in its place. And therefore, as we have no order from God to the contrary, we are right in administering Baptism to the same kind of subjects.

The reasons why I think Circumcision was appointed under a dispensation of the same covenant believers are now under, are the following, *viz.* 1st, Because the same spiritual blessings were promised. Jehovah promised to be a God unto Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7. which promise being Amen in Christ, Gal. iii. 17. must comprehend in it more than temporal blessings : It surely contained in it spiritual and eternal blessings also. Hence when God is said to pardon iniquity, and pass by transgression ; not to retain his anger, but delight in mercy ; to have compassion upon us, subdue our iniquities, and cast our sins into the

the depths of the sea ; he is spoken of as performing the truth to Jacob, and the mercy which he swore to Abraham, Mich. vii. 18, 19, 20. When Jehovah engages to be our God in Christ, what can we desire more ? This is the very sum of eternal life, Rev. xxi. 7. " He that overcometh shall inherit all things, " and *I will be his God.*"

2. As the same blessings were promised, so likewise were they to the same subjects, *viz. Believers.* The only difference is, that before they looked to a Saviour to come ; now, they look to him as actually come.—The way by which Abraham was justified, and that by which all true Christians are justified, is one and the same, *to wit,* Not by the works of the law, but by the righteousness of faith, Rom. iv. Christ was the mercy promised to Abraham, and Abraham saw his day and was glad. Paul testifies that the Gospel was preached to Abraham,—That it is the blessing of Abraham which is come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ,—That they which be of faith are the children *of,* and blessed *with,* faithful Abraham, Gal. iii. Therefore I conclude, that the difference between the Abrahamic and Christian covenant altogether lies in the œconomy or external mode of administration ; what we now have, is only a fairer edition of the same thing.

That Christian Baptism is come in the place of Circumcision, will be as easy to demonstrate. Let it be observed, that Circumcision was not esteemed a trifling matter ; at its first institution, God said it should be a token of the covenant, Gen. xvii. 11. Paul calls it a seal

seal of the righteousness of faith, and says it profited much every way, Rom. iii. 1, 2. ch. iv.

11. Now if Circumcision be done away as an Old Testament rite, surely we may look for something as good or better in its place: The Jewish Passover is no more, but we have the Lord's Supper;—Jewish Priests are no more, but we have Jesus Christ, our great High-Priest;—and if we have not the Seventh-day Sabbath, we have the First. But what have we in the place of Circumcision? It will not suffice for answer to say, We have the Circumcision of the heart, for *that* Abraham had before he received Circumcision in the flesh, Rom. iv. 11. That Circumcision in the flesh intimated the corruption of the heart, and its need of being circumcised with the Circumcision made without hands, I readily grant, but outward Circumcision is done away*. What then? Have we no external ordinance in its place? If not, the Church by the coming of Christ, is deprived of an ordinance which the Apostle said profited much every way. But there is good ground to suppose that Baptism has succeeded Circumcision, because both ordinances appear to have the same signification: As the blood in Circumcision might point out the blood of Christ, when he should be cut off from the land of the living, to remove the guilt of his people, and prevent their being

* That Circumcision should be changed is not in the least surprising, for it was a bloody rite, and best suited that bloody dispensation to which it was confined: But when the great propitiatory sacrifice was offered up, and the atoning blood thereof shed upon the cross, it were fit that the bloody sacrifices which had long shadowed it forth should cease, and with them the bloody rite of Circumcision.

cut off from God for ever; so may the water in Baptism present to our view that same fountain opened for sin and uncleanness—that precious blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin. The blood of circumcision might intimate, as noted before, the natural corruption of the party circumcised, together with his need of regeneration and sanctification; so, in like manner, the water of Baptism, though it be neither the one nor the other of these, is a sign evidently signifying the absolute necessity of both.—And whereas Circumcision was but once to be administered under the Old Testament; so Baptism is but once to be administered under the New; and both as ordinances of admission into the visible Church. Circumcision was the door into the Church in Abraham's time; Baptism in ours. And may we not from hence conclude, that both ordinances are to be administered to the same kind of subjects? If so, then not only believers, but their seed also are to be baptised. And of this I am the more persuaded, since I read of whole households being baptized with the heads of them. Our opponents suppose there were no children in those households; but can they prove it. If they had read of whole households being circumcised, they would have supposed that children were included; and as they would have supposed in *that* case, so we suppose in *this*.

It is but a weak objection to Baptism's coming in the place of Circumcision, to say, That the former is administered both to males and females, but that the latter was administered to males only, because the females were included

cluded in the males, but were not in the nature of things capable of being circumcised : But Baptism, as it is less painful, equally as significant, and more simple ; so it may be far more conveniently and universally applied, to females with as much ease and propriety as to males : If the former dispensation was limited, the present is not so ; now there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, but all are one in Christ.—Now, is it not more rational to consider the external ordinance of Baptism, thus coming in the place of Circumcision, than to find so important an ordinance done away, and no other substituted in its place ?

But the Apostle's words, Col. ii. 11. are so convincing, as not to leave room with me for the shadow of a doubt. " In whom," says he, (speaking of Christ) " ye are circumcised with " the Circumcision made without hands, in " putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, " by the Circumcision of Christ." Verse 12, " Buried with him in Baptism."—What is here meant by the Circumcision of Christ? Not that which he received in the flesh when an infant, for that was the Jewish rite the Apostle is here opposing, in opposition to those Jewish teachers who insisted on the necessity of continuing of it: Nor can it be the spiritual and inward Circumcision of the heart, for that he had just mentioned before, and called the Circumcision without hands; and we must not suppose the Apostle guilty of so nonsensical a tautology as to say, Ye are circumcised with the Spiritual Circumcision, by the Spiritual Circumcision; but he plainly says, that the Circum-

Circumcision of Christ is, being buried with him in Baptism. And hence with propriety says the pious Bishop Hall, "What is Baptism, but an Evangelical Circumcision? What was Circumcision but an Evangelical Baptism? One both supplied, and succeeded the other; and the Author of both, would undergo both. He would be circumcised, to sanctify his Church that was; and baptized, to sanctify his Church that should be." Contem. vol iii. p. 57.

Seeing then that the children of believers, under a dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, were admitted by the express command of God, to an ordinance which signifies the same as Baptism, and which appears to have Baptism or nothing substituted in its place; Why should we refuse this divine ordinance to the seed of believers? Have we any order from God for so doing? Where is it to be found? How can we expect to find such a prohibition, when we know, that infants, with their parents, were admitted to a similar rite, under a less perfect revelation of the same Covenant? Especially when we consider, that what belonged to Abraham, belonged also to his seed; and that believing Gentiles are the seed of Abraham, according to Rom. iv. and Gal. iii.

There is nothing like forbidding Baptism to Infants, but very much the contrary, in Mark x. 13, 14. where it is said, "They brought young children to Christ, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said

“ said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for “ of such is the kingdom of God.” In Matthew xix. 14. it is “ Of such is the kingdom “ of heaven.” If it be asked, What is here meant by the kingdom of heaven? I apprehend it must be answered, Either the kingdom of Grace, or the kingdom of Glory. But take it in which sense we please, it seems to favour Infant Baptism; if the former, *to wit*, the kingdom of Grace, or visible church, Baptism is the door of admission; if the latter, *viz.* the invisible church or kingdom of Glory, then they must be regenerated, for, according to John iii. 5. “ that which is not born again, “ cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Now, if they may be subjects of regeneration, why not of Baptism, which is an outward sign of it?

Our adversaries are ever ready to object against Baptism's being administered to Infants; that they are improper subjects, as having neither faith in Christ, nor knowledge of what is done to them. But is not this objection equally as forcible against Infant Circumcision? And Infant Salvation? Our Infants know the meaning of their Baptism, as well as the Infants of the Jews knew the meaning of their Circumcision: And if it be said, Infants cannot believe, and therefore must not be baptized; because it is written, Mark xvi. 16. “ He that *believeth* and is baptized shall “ be saved;” it might as justly be added, Infants cannot believe, and therefore cannot be saved, because it is added in the very next words, “ He that *believeth not* shall be damned.”

B

“ ed.”

“ ed.”—Where a confession of faith is spoken of as a pre-requisite to Baptism, there is no reference to infants. The Apostle gives a rule, that none should eat, but those who labour. “ It were monstrous,” says Bishop Usher, “ from thence to deny meat to children, or impotent persons.”

The Saviour of sinners took little children up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them, Mark x. 16. I think our opponents take notice, that the text does not say he baptized them. Truly I should have wondered greatly if it had, for then it would have contradicted John iv. 2. which says, “ Jesus himself baptized not.” But I conceive what Christ did to them, was far more than our baptizing them in his name, and fully proves that they are capable of the divine blessing.

Our opposers avail themselves of the words “ of such,” meaning, say they, not infants in years, but persons of an humble and child-like disposition. But is not this a forced interpretation? Does it not intimate, that its author has gone to the passage rather to support a favourite opinion, than to enter into its true and obvious meaning? “ Supposing for a moment,” as Mr. Addinton observes, “ that our Lord means grown-up persons, like children; it implies, that there is something pleasing to Christ in children; and if such grown-up persons as are like children are the proper subjects of his kingdom, certainly children themselves, to whom they are like.”

But

But why should our Saviour be so angry with his disciples, because they forbid infants in years to be brought unto him, merely because his kingdom did not consist of Infants, but of grown-up persons of an humble disposition? I think the person must have a very uncommon discernment, who can perceive any just connection between his great displeasure at them for refusing Infants to be brought to him, and assigning as the reason, that his kingdom consisted of quite different persons of an humble disposition. As some have asked, Might he not with equal or more reason have blamed them if they had forbid lambs or doves from being brought unto him? And said, Suffer them to be brought unto me, for of such, *i. e.* of persons of a meek and humble temper, is the kingdom of heaven? I conclude (and I think fairly) from this passage, that Infants make part of Christ's kingdom; and, therefore, I do not refuse Baptism to them, because it appears the only outward rite by which they may be lawfully initiated as such.

When our Lord commissioned his disciples to go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them, he made no exception to Infants; and let it be here remarked, that this commission was given to Jews, who had always seen the Infants of believers admitted with their parents to Circumcision, and knew that the Gentiles were now to be grafted into the same olive-tree, and partake of all their religious privileges: They were moreover exceedingly tenacious of their rites, and had seen their Master's kindness to little children, and had heard him say, "That his kingdom was of such:" Now,

supposing he had said to these men, Go profelyte, or disciple, all nations, circumcising them: Would any have imagined that children were excluded? And after Paul has called Baptism the Christian Circumcision, how can any suppose that they are excluded in this commission? Were they to be excluded, surely this was the very time to have mentioned it; but I do not find that it is done either here or any where else.

In 1 Cor. vii. 14. Paul makes a difference between the children of believers and infidels; he says, the latter are unclean, and the former are holy: But in what sense can one be deemed holy and the other unclean, when by nature they are both alike? The most rational and consistent answer that occurs to me is, That the offspring of believers are holy in the same sense that the Jews were an holy nation, *i. e.* because they have a divine right to be admitted into the visible church by Baptism, just as the Infants of the Jews had by Circumcision. The opposers of Infant Baptism tell us, that by holy, we are to understand legitimate, or lawfully begotten; but this, to say the least of it, appears a strange and unnatural interpretation. What need is there that one of the parents should be a believer, in order to make the child legitimate? Are not the children of infidels as lawfully begotten as the children of believers, provided they have been lawfully married? I fear many children are born into the world, whose parents are neither of them believers; but I should be sorry to infer from hence, that they are all bastards; and yet that inference seems unavoidable from the foregoing

going interpretation.—Dr. Guise observes,
 “ That the original words rendered unclean
 “ and holy, occur almost numberless times in
 “ the Seventy, and in the New Testament;
 “ but he cannot find that they are ever once
 “ used to signify illegitimate and legitimate:
 “ And as the Apostle is speaking of persons
 “ already married, there was no reason to
 “ doubt whether their children were legiti-
 “ mate, for that did not depend on the faith
 “ of the parents, but the legitimacy of their
 “ marriage.”—Dr. Doddridge notes, “ That
 “ to suppose holy signifies legitimate, and un-
 “ clean illegitimate, seems not only an unscrip-
 “ tural sense of the word, but a sense the ar-
 “ gument will by no means bear; for it would
 “ be proving a thing by itself, *idem per idem*,
 “ to argue that the converse of the parents
 “ was lawful, because the children were not
 “ bastards; whereas all who thought the con-
 “ verse of the parents unlawful, must of course
 “ think the children illegitimate.”

That the children of believers are not to be excluded from Baptism, seems to appear from Peter's words, Acts ii. 38, 39. “ Repent ye
 “ and be baptized every one of you,” &c.
 “ For the promise is to you and to your chil-
 “ dren,” &c. It is observable here, that as he encourages them to repentance by telling them they should receive the forgiveness of sins, and the influences of the Holy Ghost, so he urges them to submit to the new dispensation of the covenant by being baptized in the name of Christ, by telling them that the promise is to them and their children. The promise in Joel's prophecy, quoted in the preceding verses, seems not to be intended here,

because that was a promise of supernatural and miraculous gifts, which was already fulfilled in the Apostles, and which Peter could by no means assure all of who repented and were baptized. I therefore understand by it, the promise of Abraham's covenant, which gave his infant seed a right to Circumcision; and in this opinion I am strengthened by the Apostle's words in the 25th verse of the following chapter, where he enforceth his exhortation to repentance upon his Jewish hearers, by saying, "Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." But whatever be intended by it, it is plainly urged, as a reason why they should be baptized to whom it is made, "and it is to your children as well as to you," says the Apostle; and, therefore, it would seem to follow, that their children also ought to be baptized. "If the promise being made to the parents," says Mr. Bostwick, "was any reason why they ought to be baptized, as the Apostle expressly declares, then the same promise extending to their children, must be an equal reason for administering Baptism to them. To suppose their children excluded from Baptism, must render the Apostle's argument very confused and inconclusive; for then it must stand thus:—The promise is to you, therefore be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; the same promise is equally to your children, yet let not your children be baptized, for they are improper subjects of such an ordinance. What an absurdity!"

By

By their children, we are told by some, that not their infant, but adult offspring are intended; but neither the text, nor the scope of the argument will fairly admit of this sense; "The Apostle does not say," adds the above-mentioned Author, "the promise is now to you, and shall be to your children when grown up; but the promise *is* to you and to your children." Besides, to suppose he only means their children when grown up, and called by grace, is making next to nothing of what he says, for on this supposition, he says no more than might be said of the children of heathens. On the whole, I cannot think this passage is to be given up as making nothing for Infant Baptism.

Many learned men have urged apostolic tradition in favour of Infant Baptism.* They quote passages to prove it from Justin Martyr, who wrote about forty years after the Apostles;—from Irenæus, who wrote about the year of our Lord 167;—likewise from Tertullian, who lived near the end of the second century: Dr. Gill says he was the first who spoke of Infant Baptism, and at the same time spoke against it: It is allowed he advised to defer it, except in cases of necessity, or danger of death; but then it is contended, that he stood alone in his opinion, and that his advising to defer it, except in such cases, may be justly deemed an incontestable proof that Infant Baptism was practised in his day. It is true, the Primitive Fathers have said little of it, and the reason seems to be, that in their days no disputes had been moved about it.

* This part on apostolic tradition is chiefly selected from a pamphlet wrote (I think) by a Mr. Towgood.

But

But in the time of Origen, disputes arose about original sin, and then more express mention was made of Infant Baptism, particularly by Origen, and after him by Cyprian, in whose time a council of sixty-six Bishops met at Carthage, when one Fidus, a country Bishop, having entertained some doubt whether he might lawfully administer Baptism to Infants before they were eight days old, according to the law of Circumcision; and it was unanimously agreed, that it was unnecessary to defer it to the eighth day. Now as this was only about one hundred and fifty years after the Apostles, and some of these Bishops, we may reasonably suppose, were seventy or eighty years old, who of course were baptized in their infancy, which carries up the practice to within eighty years of the Apostles; and at the time of their Baptism, there were many alive who must have been born in the Apostle's days, and could not but certainly know what their appointment and practice was as to this matter.

That it was the universal practice from the beginning of Christianity, appears from the well-known controversy between Austin and Pelagius, concerning original sin, about the year 410. Austin, to prove that infants were tainted with it, frequently mentions their Baptism, demanding, Why infants were baptized for the remission of sin, if they had none? Pelagius found himself puzzled, and no doubt would have denied the fact, had there been any foundation for it; but he was so far from doing it, that some of his adversaries having drawn it as a consequence of his opinion, he disclaims it with indignation, saying, That he
had

had been slanderously represented by men as denying the sacrament of Baptism to Infants; and adds, that he never heard, no not any impious heretick, who did so.

Now, are we to suppose that a person of Pelagius's learning and acuteness, who lived so near the time of the Apostles, and was personally conversant in some of the most noted churches in Europe, Asia, and Africa, would not be able to discover whether Infant Baptism was an innovation, especially when his cause so much required it?—If all the churches were established by the Apostles upon the plan of Adult Baptism, and every where rejecting infants; it is incredible, that Infant Baptism should so early and universally prevail, that Pelagius should never have heard or read of any, either christian or heretick, who denied Baptism to them. When it began to be *denied*, and by whom, we are not at a loss to know, but history does not inform us when or by whom it was *introduced*; from which, we conclude, it must have been handed down from the Apostles.

Notwithstanding Infant Baptism has long been practised, not only by the churches of England and Scotland, but likewise by every national church in the christian world, together with the far greater part of those who dissent from all national establishments; yet it appears so strange and inconsistent to a few who reject it, that I shall not be surprized to hear, that they have hardly patience to read these few pages wrote in its defence. Admitting, therefore, that the christian church was
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at first established upon their plan; What could those say for themselves who first begun to baptize Infants? If it appears so strange to a few, after having been so long practised by the generality of Christians, how strange must it have appeared at its first entrance? Surely they who first begun the practice, must have been strangely cried out against; and what, I ask again, could they say for themselves? They could not urge in their defence either Apostolic precept or practice, for the whole Christian world would have rose up in opposition against them. That so great an error could so universally prevail, and in so short a time, contrary to the command and example of all the Apostles, the primitive saints, and the original establishment of all the churches in the world, seems as difficult to believe by me, as to believe Infant Baptism may seem difficult to those who now deny it.

A great number of sects and heresies sprung up to the rending the church into many contending parties in those early times, which were spies one upon another; strange indeed that they should all agree to depart from the Apostolic practice to baptize Infants! I believe never any error (if it be one) prevailed so universally, where the temptation to it was so small.

P A R T II.

On the Mode of BAPTISM.

HAVING endeavoured to point out the proper subjects of Baptism, I shall next consider the mode by which it is lawfully administered. To me, this appears a matter of less moment than the former, and I cannot help lamenting, that so much stress is laid upon it. But, alas! the farther we advance in self-knowledge, the more firmly are we persuaded of this melancholy truth, that there is a proneness in us to contend about little things, and neglect the more weighty matters.

That water is to be used in Baptism is so plain, as not to admit of a dispute amongst us who approve of outward Baptism at all; but what quantity of it is necessary, to my remembrance, the Bible no more informs us, than it does what quantity of bread and wine are to be taken in the Lord's supper; and I see no reason why we might not as well dispute about the one as the other: If the efficacy be in the outward elements, perhaps the more the better; but if the bread and wine in the Lord's supper, and water in Baptism, be only outward signs, I see not why a morsel of bread may not answer the end as well as a full meal—Why a spoonful of wine may not do as well as a full pint—and, by a parity of reason, why a handful of water may not answer the end in Baptism as well as a full river.

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That the Greek word rendered *baptize*, signifies to dip, is not disputed by me; but that it is its only signification, must be denied. The very learned and judicious Dr. Owen, tells us, that in all good authors, the word not only signifies to dip, but also to wash, or cleanse; and he was obliged to say, and ready to prove, that no honest man, who understood the Greek tongue, could deny, but that the word signified to wash, as well as to dip. Nor does it always signify to wash by dipping, but also by the application of water otherways, as Mark vii. 4, 5. where it is found to express the washings which the Pharisees used after coming from the market before they eat; also the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels and tables or beds; but we can hardly suppose that they plunged their whole bodies in water before their meals, or that they dipped their tables or beds at all, especially if (as many learned writers have said) the Jews had no such custom, either then or before. There were different kinds of washings among the Jews; hence the Apostle speaking of that dark dispensation, says, that it stood in meats and drinks, and *divers washings*; or, as it is in the original, *baptisms*, Heb. ix. 10. And that some of their washings were by sprinkling is plain from Lev. viii. 11. chap. xiv. 7. 14—17. Num. xix. 18. It is true we read, 2 Chron. iv. 6. that the Molten Sea was made for the Priests to wash in, but it does not follow that they dipped themselves in it; I rather think, that they only washed their hands and feet thereat, according to the general rule, Exod. xxx. 19. And it is likely this was the way the Pharisees washed before dinner; hence they said to Jesus,
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Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands before they eat bread, Matt. xv. 2. Now, if they be said to have been baptised; who had water applied to their hands and feet only, Why may we not say our children are baptized, when in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, water hath been solemnly applied to their faces?

The opposers of our practice are not willing to allow the term *baptism* to what we do to our children, but generally call it *infant sprinkling*; and some learned in the Greek, call it *rantism*, from the Greek word *παντιζο*; to sprinkle.

But, with submission, I would observe, that we have the very best authority for calling sprinkling baptizing; the Author of the epistle to the Hebrews did so before us, particularly in the afore-cited passage, where, speaking of the different modes of applying water for purification under the law, he calls them diverse baptisms; and that sprinkling was one mode he had his eye upon at that time, is quite clear from the following verses, in which he expressly mentions *sprinkling* the unclean with the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer; as likewise that Moses sprinkled both the book and all the people, together with the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, Heb. ix. 10. 13. 19. 21.

Moreover, in Dan. v. 21. where it is said that Nebuchadnezzar was wet with the dew of heaven, the Seventy have rendered it, *baptized* with the dew of heaven.—Israel are said to have
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been baptized to Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; but we know they could not be dipped in the former, and that they were not in the latter: Pharoah and his hosts were dipped indeed, for they sank as lead in the mighty waters—Not so the Israelites.

The Apostles too were baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the words of Christ's Fore-runner; but not by dipping: The spirit was poured out from on high upon their heads, in the likeness of cloven tongues of fire. See Matt. iii. 11. Acts i. 5. ch. ii. 3.

That Baptism is an emblematical representation of the remission of sins is intimated by the Apostle, Acts ii. 38. but the blessing itself we have through the blood of Christ. There is nothing else which cleanseth from all sin, 1 John i. 7.—It is this only which purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, Heb. ix. 14. But we know it is spoken of as being applied by sprinkling; the blood of the sacrifices, which typified it under the law, was applied by sprinkling; and hence the blood of Jesus is called the blood of sprinkling, Heb. xii. 24. and we read of the heart's being sprinkled from an evil conscience.—Heb. x. 22.

That sprinkling is a proper method of washing, or cleansing, is plain from the stile in which the Scripture speaks of another great blessing signified by Baptism, *to wit*, Sanctification. It was promised of old, that the Messiah should sprinkle many nations, Isa. lii. 15. And when God promises the sanctifying influences

ences of his spirit as a blessing of the new covenant, he expresseth it thus, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean*, Ez. xxxvi. 25.

I would add further, that in the New Testament we have Baptisms recorded which do not appear to have been administered by dipping, as the Baptism of Saul, which he seems to have received by the hands of Ananias in the house of Judas.—Likewise the Baptism of those Gentiles to whom Peter preached in the house of Cornelious, and concerning whom he said, Can any forbid water that these should be baptized? We have no intimation that either Judas or Cornelious had baths proper to dip them in, nor is there any mention made of their going out to a river; Peter's words intimate the contrary, *Can any forbid water*, &c. The most obvious sense of which seems to be, as several learned men have observed, *Can any forbid water being brought?*

With respect to the Jailor and his household, I cannot pretend to say where they were baptized; whether in his own house, or in some apartment of the prison; but there is no circumstance which naturally leads me to think they were dipped. Nor does it appear likely, that the three thousand mentioned Acts ii. were baptized by dipping. I can hardly think that the Apostles could baptize so many in one day by immersing their whole bodies under water. To say that the seventy disciples assisted, is to be wise above what is written. We have no reason to think they had change of raiment for so many—To have dipped them in their wearing apparel, would have been unsafe—To have
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done it naked, would have been immodest; and to suppose that every one brought change of raiment for himself, is to suppose too much, *viz.* that they went with a design to be baptized; but surely they had no such intention, till they were first pricked to the heart.

Much stress has been laid on John's baptizing in Jordan, and in Enon near Salim, because there was much water there. But allowing that John's Baptism was a Christian ordinance, (which is by no means clear) I can see much propriety in his fixing on such places to baptize in, without supposing that he administered it by dipping. We read that all Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, went out to him: Now the much water, or many waters, as it is in the Greek, *i. e.* the many streams of Enon, would be very refreshing to so great a multitude, in so warm a climate, and afford him a more convenient opportunity for baptizing such numbers, than he could have had in any particular house, let the mode have been what it would. I incline to think he did not dip them, not only for such reasons as noticed above respecting the three thousand in the 2d of the Acts of the Apostles; but more especially because his baptizing with water, is spoken of as prefiguring Christ's baptizing them with the Holy Ghost and fire, see Acts i. 5. 8. chap. xi. 15, 16. I leave it to the reader's own judgment to determine, whether plunging the body in water, or pouring water upon it, was the most suitable emblem of the pouring out of the spirit.

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As to the prepositions rendered *into*, and *out of*, it is well known they are very often rendered *to* and *from*; and allowing them properly translated where they make most for our opposers, they do not make so much as their cause requires; for if our Lord and the Eunuch went *into*, and came *out of*, the water, it does not absolutely follow, that either of them were over-head in the water. Where is there a text in the whole Bible that says any person was dipped over-head, when Baptism was administered unto him. For such a passage I have sought, but have not found it; and am now persuaded such a one is not to be found.

Where the Apostle speaks of believers as buried with Christ by Baptism, in his epistles to the Romans and Colossians, it is evident he intends their dying unto sin, and living unto righteousness. Every true Christian is crucified with Christ, and quickened by the Spirit, that he may live unto God. The mode of Baptism is not the Apostle's subject in those places, but the things signified by Baptism. And it is a question whether there be any allusion to the mode of Baptism in them at all. But allowing it as our adversaries desire, it only follows, that dipping is a proper mode of baptizing; and as to dip, is a good sense of the original word rendered baptize, it is a mode to which I have no objection, where all other circumstances are agreeable to the rules of decency and safety; but whether all the Baptisms administered in our day are conformable to the first, I appeal to the modesty of such spectators as have not got inured to them by custom.

THE CONCLUSION.

SINCE God has no where *forbid* Infant Baptism, or said that dipping is essential to the right administration of it; let us not forbid what he hath not forbidden, or make that essential which he has not made so: But let us go on to dedicate our dear offspring to the Lord in this solemn ordinance, and remember, that hereby we obligate ourselves to train them up in his nurture and admonition. He hath committed to our trust both the care of their bodies and souls, and we should watch for them as those who must give an account.—Let us then begin betimes to instruct them, not only how to live honestly and usefully to men, but humbly and devoutly to God.—How to live on *earth*, so as to live in *heaven*.—Let us endeavour to make them acquainted with the evil of their natures, and the necessity of the new birth.—Let us frequently direct them to that precious name which is as ointment poured forth,—into which they have been baptized, and by which alone they can be saved, Acts iv. 12. And particularly let us recommend to their attention, a studious search into the holy Scriptures; these are able to make them wise unto salvation, and to furnish them unto all good works: Be it our concern therefore, that our children, like Timothy, may know them from their infancy. Methinks what God said to Israel of old, he says to every believing parent in reference to the Scriptures, Deut. vi. 7. “Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest

“walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” We must mind to instruct them by our lives as well as our lips; if our own actions are not agreeable to our instructions, how can we expect that theirs should?—But as our best directions will only be like water spilt upon the ground without the divine blessing, let us at all times accompany them with our fervent prayers to God that he would make them effectual.—We have many motives to excite us to such a conduct, as, 1st, The worth of our children’s souls, which, in the judgment of Christ, is more than the whole world. Matth. xvi. 26. 2dly, The many dangers to which they are exposed in the world. 3dly, Our unspeakable misery, if their blood should be required at our hands, as being lost by means of our neglect. *Lastly*, Our great happiness in training them up for heaven, and being instrumental to their everlasting salvation. How blessed will they be, whose children shall be their crown of rejoicing in the great day! Oh! then, let us not neglect the precious souls of our dear children, for if we do, there needs no further witness to prove that we neglect our own, which is the very height of folly and madness. That these considerations may sink deep into our hearts, may God of his infinite mercy grant for Christ’s sake. *Amen.*

